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In today's Business Supplement

- ★ The Tel Aviv bull market
- ★ Measuring health-care costs
- ★ Yehuda Harel's "new kibbutz"

Money
 THE JERUSALEM POST BUSINESS SUPPLEMENT

Arafat 'furious' at Netanyahu delaying bid

DAVID MAKOVSKY

PALESTINIAN Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat was said to be "furious" yesterday at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's proposal of a spring 1999 date for the last IDF pull-back in the West Bank. Yesterday's negotiating sessions failed once again to end in agreement on a US compromise formula on pullbacks, the conclusion of which is likely to determine whether another summit will take place between the two leaders, officials say. Speaking briefly to reporters in Gaza last night, the Palestinian spokesman for the talks, Marwan Kafafani, said, "The meeting was extremely tense. The statements that were made today destroyed all hopes that we could reach an agreement" (that would enable a meeting between Arafat and Netanyahu).

US special Middle East peace coordinator Dennis Ross held several hours of extensive discussions last night with Arafat. Jerusalem was awaiting word about the success of those talks to see whether there was sufficient reason to warrant another snap meeting between the two leaders.

On Monday night US-Israeli talks continued until 4 a.m. Officials indicate that the US has presented a compromise date to break the current impasse on when Israel will make the third pullback in the territories. The Palestinians want that pullback, which they believe will give them the bulk of the West Bank, by September.

Netanyahu adviser David Bar-Ilan has said that Israel wanted the third pullback to occur by spring 1999, which would be timed to coincide with the Oslo deadline for completing talks on the final disposition of the territories.

"When the final status talks are set to end we will implement the last redeployment because we will then know in which areas there will be a Palestinian Authority," Bar-Ilan said.

Palestinian negotiator Hassan Afour rejected the idea. "This is an irresponsible proposal...the agreement specifically states that the last stage of further redeployments from the West Bank be completed by September 7, 1997," Afour told Reuters.

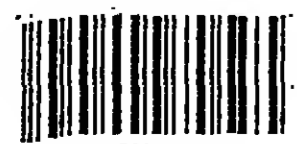
It remains unclear whether the US proposal would be midway between the two dates - summer 1998 - or would be closer to the date preferred by one of the sides.

Meanwhile, senior Egyptian Foreign Ministry official Nabil Fahmy left Gaza on Monday, after almost a week's stay. Noting that Fahmy's stay has coincided with a harder position by Arafat, Israelis have insisted that Fahmy had been urging Arafat to take a tough line. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, however, has rejected this allegation.

Cabinet to consider economic reforms

THE cabinet is to consider major structural reforms to the economy today. Among the sectors facing changes are public transportation, communications, water, housing and agriculture.

Full report, Page 8



309007



Rescue workers prepare to evacuate one of the victims of yesterday's Mahane Yehuda crash.

(Itan Harel)

One dead, 6 hurt as Arab youth crashes car into Jerusalem store

A 15-year-old porter in the Mahane Yehuda market took his employer's car from an alley off Jaffa Road, careened across the main road and crashed into a burekas bakery next to the market's entrance, injuring seven people, one fatally. Police said they believe it was an accident and not a terrorist attack. Yosef Cohen, 72, a beggar who came up by bus every day from Beersheba, was sitting on a chair outside the shop and was fatally

injured. The chair was flattened. Four customers inside the shop were pinned between the car and the counter. Eli Yaron, behind the counter, saw the car coming at him, leapt aside and was saved. Another person was hit just before the crash. Rachel Hanania, who runs a religious artifacts shop in the alley where the car was parked, said, "The car came shooting past. It hit

a poor man on the crosswalk and then the car was hit by another coming up Jaffa road. That is why he did not drive straight into the market. I understood immediately this was a suicide attack. I ran inside and locked the door." The youth, who cannot be identified because he is a minor, lives in Kalandia refugee camp. His father, who works as a laborer in Jerusalem, has no security record.

Jamal Saed, a resident of the camp, said the family "is not political as far as we know and [the boy] is too young to be political." Jerusalem Police Commander Arye Amit said last night that "We are checking in both directions but leaning towards an accident." He said the youth "did not know the difference between the gas and the brake pedal." There were no brake marks on the road.

(Continued on Page 9)

Swiss seek 'to make amends'

BATSHEVA TSUR and news agencies

SWITZERLAND made certain attempts yesterday to placate Israel following a breakdown in relations with Jewish organizations over the issue of Holocaust victims' accounts in Swiss banks. But the Swiss cabinet refused to apologize for remarks made by the outgoing president that Jewish calls for a compensation fund were "extortion and blackmail."

Swiss Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti telephoned Foreign Minister David Levy, saying that he wanted to make amends for the remarks made by former president Jean-Pascal Delamuraz. Foreign Ministry sources said in Jerusalem.

Cotti informed Levy that he planned to hold a press conference to explain that there had been "a misunderstanding." He said that he would circulate two documents - one on the establishment of a Holocaust memorial fund and the other, a "correction" to Delamuraz's remarks.

Cotti stressed that Switzerland was interested in maintaining its good relations with Israel and extended an invitation to Levy to visit Bern.

During the conversation, Levy told Cotti that the remarks had been seen in Israel as "a slap in the face to the Jewish people and the state of Israel," a Levy aide said.

Earlier yesterday, Swiss Ambassador Pierre Monod met with Jewish Agency Chairman Avraham Burg at the ambassador's request. Monod reportedly told Burg about the current discussions and contacts within the Swiss establishment over Delamuraz's remarks.

The Jewish organizations have no demands or requests but they "cannot, from a personal point of view, sit around the table with persons who have refrained from criticizing Delamuraz's remarks," Burg explained. From the moral point of view, Burg said, it was not possible to sit down with persons who had insulted the memory of the six million.

The moves came on the heels of reports from Zurich that Swiss bank share transfers on the stock market had declined Monday after the Jewish organizations threatened a boycott unless the Swiss paid restitution for the alleged wartime profiteering.

But despite the diplomatic moves and expectations in Jerusalem, Cotti merely said in his press conference that his government wanted to use the dormant bank accounts to create a Holocaust memorial fund, Reuters reported.

The federal council, Switzerland's cabinet, also ignored the demands that it rebuke Delamuraz - who has since become economics minister - for his remarks.

"There was no apology by the federal council because the remarks were misunderstood and led to excessive reactions," the government spokesman, Achille Casanova, told reporters after the seven ministers conferred by phone for 90 minutes.

In its statement, the cabinet also criticized the threats by Jewish groups to call a boycott of Swiss banks and said they endangered joint efforts to track the Jewish

(Continued on Page 9)

Flu not fooled by high temperatures

JUDY SIEGEL

THE elusive, annoying and sometimes deadly flu virus functions according to the calendar, not the thermometer. Influenza has a field day in the winter months, even when the temperatures - as they have been for weeks - are more like those in May than January.

Dr. Amos Yinnon, a senior infectious disease expert at Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek Hospital, says scientists have not yet discovered why the virus spreads in winter without connection to cold weather.

They do know that the microbe, which was described by the 4th century BCE Greek physician Hippocrates, keeps mutating into new strains, requiring annual vaccinations for those at high risk.

The virus thrives when windows are closed and rooms are not aired. If somebody with flu sneezes on your sandwich, you don't have to worry about catching it, as it doesn't survive the digestive system.

It is transmitted by the aerosol route, from the throat or nose. Scientists can't say how long it survives in the air or on an object. But, if somebody coughs or sneezes onto a computer keyboard, or the keys of an automatic teller, or a phone receiver, or into your face, you should start worrying.

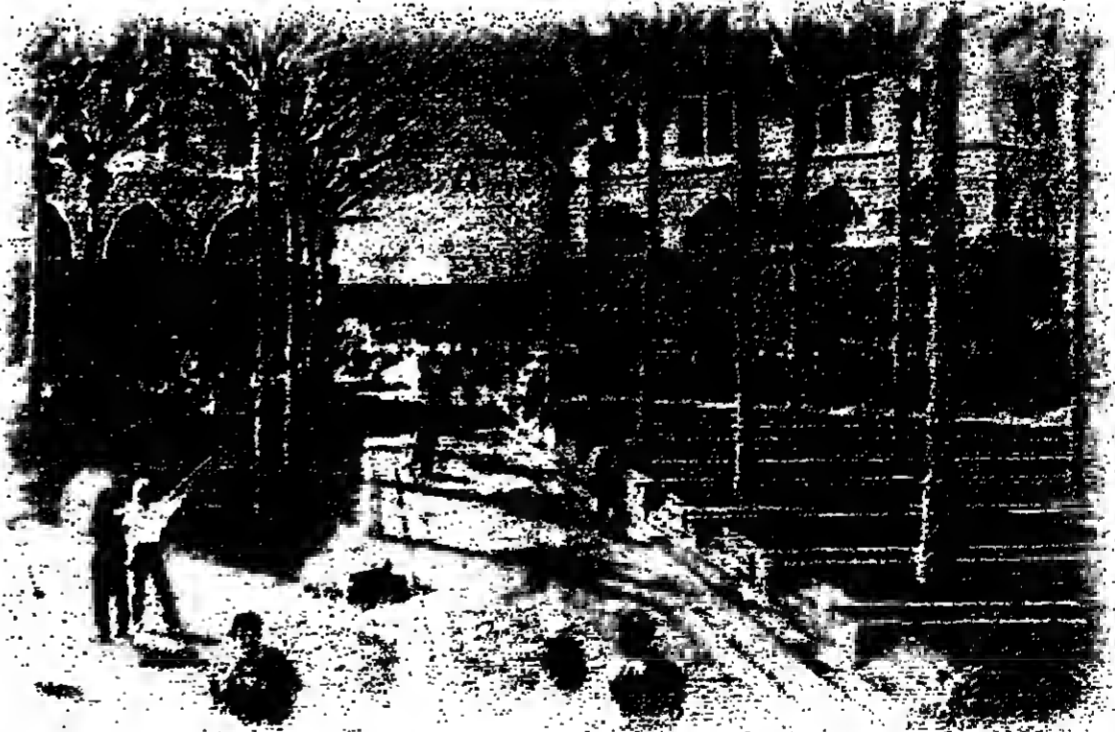
Better still, before exposure, get the vaccine - which protects about three-quarters of all persons exposed, says Yinnon. It misses when the actual strain of flu that hits you is a bit different from the ones used as the basis for the current year's vaccine (which is based on cases reported months before) or if the immunization didn't trigger a protective reaction by your immune system.

Although busy general practitioners sometimes interchangeably use the words "flu" and a "cold," there are clear differences in symptoms. A cold can mean a cough, runny nose and some fever, but you can go to work in spite of it. Flu is a systemic disease, with a sore throat, shivering, muscle pains, weakness, headache and high fever - and you will be too sick to go to work. Antibiotics won't kill the virus. The symptoms usually peter out in five days.

But children or adults with a chronic illness or weak immune system, and all those over 65, should be vaccinated, as they are at risk for complications, says Yinnon.

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Liver transplant patient gives birth

JUDY SIEGEL

A WOMAN who underwent a liver transplant four years ago has given birth to a healthy baby girl, following a pregnancy closely supervised by doctors at the Rabin Medical Center-Beilinson Campus's new clinic for liver diseases.

Ella Simantov, who had to have an abortion when she developed a serious liver disease during her first pregnancy, is only the third Israeli liver recipient to have given birth.

The woman told Dr. Ran Tur-Kaspa, head of the institute for liver diseases, that she wanted to have a baby. After consulting with Dr. Moshe Hod, head of the hospital's high-risk pregnancy unit, Tur-Kaspa encouraged her to try.

The doctors closely supervised her liver function, and the pregnancy proceeded without any undue problems. She was able to continue taking anti-rejection drugs without affecting the fetus.

In the 38th week, she underwent a cesarean section and delivered her daughter.



Rabbi Yitzhak Kaduri (right) attaches the mezuzah to a new Kvat Holim Clalit clinic in the capital's Ramat Shlomo neighborhood, assisted by Clalit director-general Avigdor Kaplan.

MKs fight to move child's grave closer to parents' home

LIAT COLLINS

SEVERAL MKs have launched a fight to have an eight-year-old boy who died in a car crash buried closer to his family's home, after the Arad rabbinat refused to do so because of alleged questions over his Jewishness.

Alexander Dubrovitzky, the Israeli-born son of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, was buried in Beersheba after dying in the crash on Saturday. His family lives in Arad, but the local rabbinat refused to bury him there, saying there are doubts that his mother, who immigrated here 16 years ago, is Jewish.

Several MKs have joined the fight to move his grave to a site where his family, which includes a soldier, can visit more easily. Deputy Religious Affairs Minister Yigal Bibi (National Religious Party) has promised to look into the issue.

Yisrael Ba'aliya faction chairman Roman Bronfman had asked Bibi to intervene and inform the family of his promise.

MK Anat Maor (Meretz) registered a protest with the ministry when the affair was first published, asking: "How can it be that the father and eldest son are fit to serve

in the IDF, but a young child who is killed is placed beyond the fence?"

Meretz leader Yossi Sarid said representatives of the Religious Affairs Ministry and the Chief Rabbinate had promised the Knesset Immigration and Absorption Committee in the past that there would be no more problems of burial of new immigrants because of doubts of their Judaism.

Dedi Zucker (Meretz) said he would file a High Court petition against the ministry for not abiding by the new law which demands that a section of all cemeteries be set aside for alternative civil burials.

found him apathetic; the bottle of Ventolin was empty next to him. She rushed him to the Netanya hospital, where he was found to have a rapid and irregular heartbeat. After consulting with the National Poison Control Center in Haifa, they treated him with active carbon to bind with the drug, which is manufactured by Glaxo.

Judy Siegel

Baby revived after drinking asthma medicine

A two-year-old boy who drank 70 cc. of asthma medication was discharged from Laniado Hospital yesterday after being revived.

Tomer Bichachi, who lives in Netanya, is asthmatic and treated with Ventolin. His mother left the house for a short time, leaving the toddler with his eight-year-old sister. When the mother returned, she

Judy Siegel

Assaf Harofeh technique detects Down Syndrome

JUDY SIEGEL

ASSAF Harofeh Hospital is offering a new, noninvasive method to identify fetuses with Down Syndrome in women under 35. The method was developed in Britain and using a conventional ultrasound machine and computer program, it reportedly identifies 80% of all cases.

The technique, developed by Prof. Kypros Nicolaides of London, examines nuchal translucency (the translucency of tissue at the nape of the neck) and the distance from a certain tissue in the neck to another. If the findings are beyond the normal range (translucency of more than three millimeters), the pregnant woman is sent for an invasive test that is 100% accurate: by amniocentesis or chorionic villae sampling.

However, these invasive tests can in a small percentage of cases cause a miscarriage, and are very expensive, so they are not used on women under 35.

Until now, women under 35 (who have a considerably lower risk of having a baby with Down Syndrome), are offered a blood test for alpha-feto-protein (which picks up 60% of cases); if the level indicates a problem, such a woman would be offered the invasive technique as well.

According to Dr. Arie Herman, who heads the nuchal translucency program at the Tzrifin hospital, the harmless ultrasound scan is conducted abdominally or vaginally in the 11th to 14th week of pregnancy. So far, gynecologists in Britain and elsewhere have conducted nearly 100,000 tests, and it picked up Down Syndrome (confirmed at birth or by invasive tests during pregnancy) in eight out of 10 cases.

Herman notes that the technique will not replace conventional techniques, but be added to the arsenal of existing tests. It is being offered free to qualified women during the morning shift as part of an international survey. If the demand becomes so great that scans need to be performed during the afternoon shift, the hospital will ask the Health Ministry to find a funding source.

Religious Affairs panel appoints new heads to TA burial society

EVELYN GORDON

THE Religious Affairs Ministry has appointed a managing director and a deputy managing director for the Tel Aviv Hevra Kadisha (burial society), effective immediately, a ministry representative told the Knesset State Control Committee yesterday.

However, the society's workers are still planning to go on strike today, after the workers' committee walked out of a meeting with the Religious Affairs Ministry.

According to the workers' committee, the strike was called to protest the appointment of MK Rafael Pinhasi (Shas) to an emergency committee overseeing reform of the organization. Pinhasi, who is facing an indictment on corruption charges, is not a fit person to eliminate corruption from the organization, they say.

However, the Religious Affairs Ministry charges that the real reason for the strike is the emergency committee's decision to hire temporary workers.

The new managing director and his deputy began work yesterday, the ministry said, and within 14 days a completely new management will be in place. According to ministry spokesman Yair Wolf, the appointments were unrelated to the strike,

but rather stemmed from the urgent need to effect major reforms in the society.

A committee also will be set up to investigate the workers' salaries, Wolf said.

Excessive salaries are one of the main reasons the organization racked up a NIS 328 million deficit in the first half of the year.

According to a recent petition to the High Court of Justice by MKs Avraham Poraz (Meretz) and Yona Yahav (Labor), the average wage paid by the society was some NIS 26,000 a month as of March 1995.

In 1993, the chairman's salary cost the society NIS 1.3 million a year, a half-time comptroller cost NIS 413,000 for a year, an ordinary teller cost NIS 384,000, a driver cost NIS 270,000 and a messenger cost NIS 212,000, the petition said. The ministry's action will presumably lead to the petition being withdrawn, since its goal was to force the appointment of a manager.

State Control Committee chairman Ran Cohen (Meretz) said it was critical to impose order on the organization, which performs about a third of the country's burials and receives some NIS 40m. a year from the government.

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Beduin protest court's eviction order

DOZENS of Beduin from the Jahalin mibe of about 45 families yesterday possessed a court order that they must leave their tent camps near Ma'aleh Adumim.

The 50 demonstrators, including about a dozen children, stood along the Jerusalem-Jericho highway, side by side reading "The world should see the plight of the Jahalin" and "The court decision is racist."

Border Police surrounded the protesters to keep them off the highway.

In August, the Supreme Court ruled that the Jahalin must leave the area where they have been grazing their goats for several decades. The

court said each family should be offered a plot near Abu Dis, on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Several members of the tribe rejected the offer, saying the plots they were being offered were close to a garbage dump.

An IDF officer said yesterday that for now, the Jahalin would not be removed by force. "We hope they will go there in good will," said Col. Ehud Zarakchia.

However, Israeli Arab MK Taleh a-Sanaa, whose ancestors are Beduin and who joined yesterday's protest, said Israel had no right to uproot the Jahalin.

"They cannot bury people alive," he said. (AP)

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Explosions break tenuous peace in Peru siege

TWO explosions punctuated the stalemate in Peru's hostage crisis yesterday, shattering an edgy peace at the besieged Japanese ambassador's residence where Marxist terrorists hold 74 captives.

ANDREW CAWTHORNE
LIMA

ing an automatic rifle running across the driveway at the front of the compound shortly before the explosions.

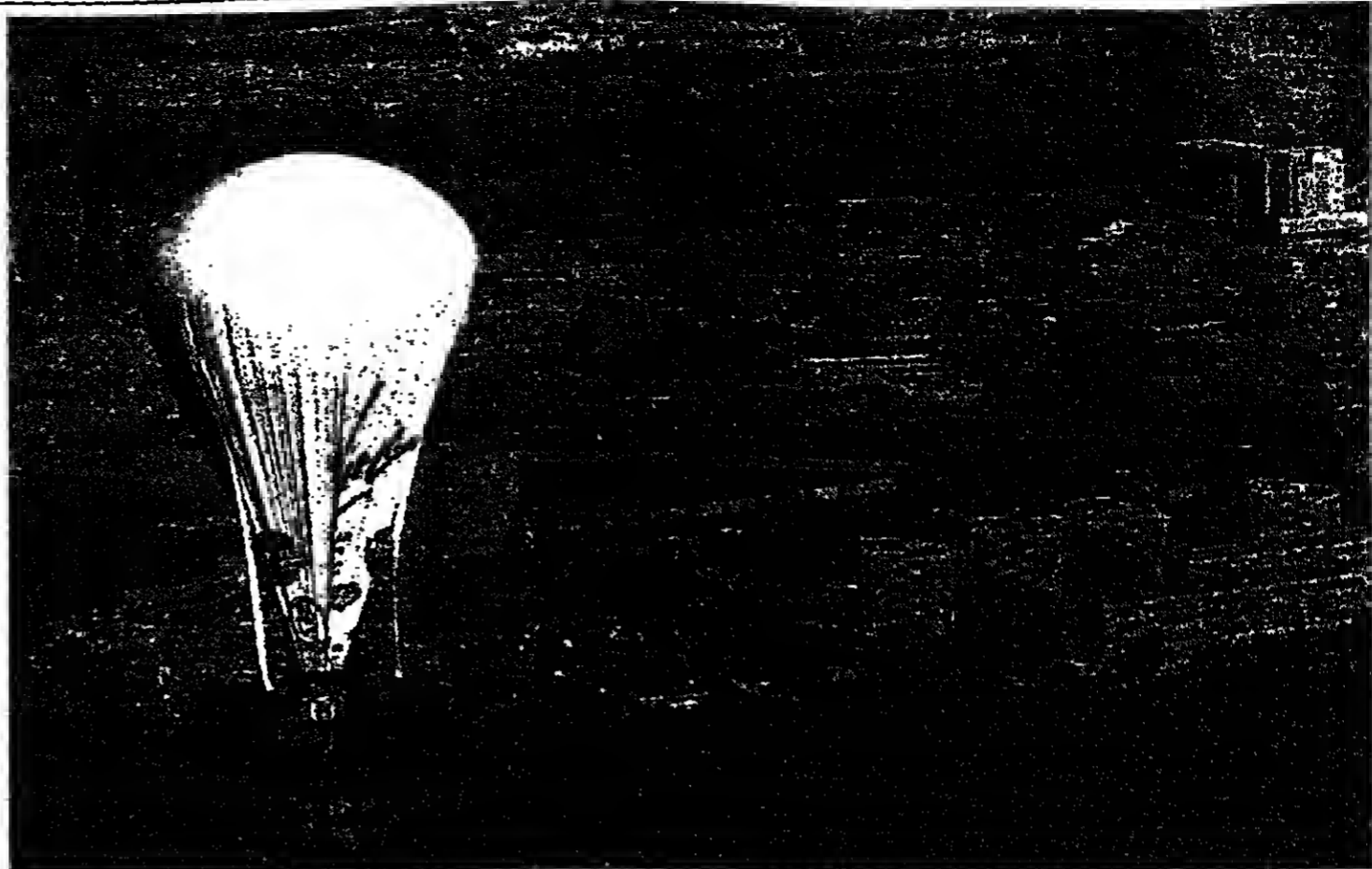
"I saw two of them. They ran back at different times." Reuters cameraman Carlos Valdez said. "I think the guerrillas were trying to get one of the car batteries but they made a noise and decided to abort the operation, firing a couple of shots after they reached the house again."

Police surrounding the residence could not confirm that version of events but immediately moved to a state of alert. They speculated the MRTA was trying to make its presence felt. "We think it was a psychological tactic to let us know that

they're there," one policeman said. The explosions were the first heard at the residence since December 26, when a single loud boom briefly shook the area. That explosion was believed to be caused by an animal tripping a mine in the compound.

The explosions underscored the delicately balanced nature of the crisis, which began 21 days ago when about 20 heavily armed MRTA rebels stormed a cocktail party at the residence and took more than 500 guests hostage.

President Alberto Fujimori, who has maintained a "no compromise" stand throughout the siege, met late into the night with ministers to discuss options for a peaceful end to the crisis, government sources said. The meeting lasted nearly 10 hours.



MARRAKESH EXPRESS - Richard Branson's Global Challenger flies over Marrakesh in an attempt to travel around the world in 18 days.

Criminal charges sought against Milosevic associates

BELGRADE (AP) - The opposition accused some of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's closest associates of organizing police beatings of demonstrators, and said yesterday its lawyers would pursue criminal charges against them.

The Serbian capital was quiet as people celebrated Christmas according to the Orthodox calendar. On Monday night, Christmas Eve, more than 200,000 people turned out for a combination protest march and holiday celebration.

The evening was marred by an explosion, likely caused by a grenade, on the grounds of the headquarters of a party allied with Milosevic. No one was hurt in the blast at offices of the Yugoslav United Left, the party of Milosevic's wife, Mirjana Markovic.

Zajedno, the opposition coalition whose name means

Together, has been behind seven weeks of protests since courts and election commissions controlled by the Serbian leader annulled November 17 local elections that the opposition won.

The coalition said that its lawyers would seek criminal charges against Interior Minister Zoran Sokolovic and his assistant Radovan Stojic.

Zajedno claimed that their investigation showed that Sokolovic ordered riot police and people in civilian clothes to club demonstrators at a December 27 protest.

The coalition also identified people it said took part in clubbing of the protesters, including some police commanders.

Prosecutors and courts are loyal to Milosevic, however, and it seemed unlikely the officials would be tried.

Swiss deny trying to falsify Nazi gold

ZURICH (Reuters) - Switzerland's central bank yesterday denied allegations in a 1946 US intelligence document that the Swiss had encouraged Nazi Germany to restamp looted gold bars to hide their origin. The Swiss National Bank said extensive 1980s research by its own staff and outside historians into World War II gold purchases from Nazi Germany had turned up no evidence to back the allegations.

"Various historical studies came to the conclusion that the [Nazi] Reichsbank sold restamped ingots to the Swiss National Bank, but nothing ever pointed to an initiative for this remodeling by the SNB," spokesman Werner Abegg told reporters.

The bank was reacting to a US intelligence document released on Monday in New York by the World Jewish Congress, which has been combing the US National Archives to trace wartime Swiss financial dealings with the Nazis. The one-page May 20, 1946, memoran-

dum prepared by the US Office of Strategic Services, forerunner to the CIA, said Switzerland persuaded the Nazis to stamp gold ingots as made before the start of the war for fear that looted gold could be seized by the allies after the war ended. But the SNB said the document was dubious.

"This document was known to the United States at that time. The fact that the US did not act on this information points to the fact that the source is probably somewhat questionable," Abegg said.

The document, titled "German Gold in Switzerland," began with a statement on sourcing, saying, "The following report from a reliable conservative French source is based on information supplied by a banker who has been involved in many currency transactions with Switzerland."

The Nazis looted millions of dollars worth of gold from the countries they occupied and used it to pay for supplies bought in countries like

neutral Switzerland or to settle various accounts in neutral nations. The SNB acknowledged in a 1985 report that it bought 1.2 billion Swiss francs (about \$300 million at 1946 exchange rates) worth of gold from Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1945.

Abegg said the SNB supported a probe by nine Swiss and international historians, named by the Bern government last month, into a range of Swiss financial dealings during the war, including the gold purchases.

"This document, which is not quite clear on who did what... just shows that more fundamental and profound research is needed into this whole period," Abegg added.

The SNB Nazi gold purchases are part of a complex of charges levelled at Switzerland by critics headed by the World Jewish Congress, who also say Swiss banks profited cynically from Nazi deposits and sat on accounts left ownerless by Jews killed in the Holocaust.

Gingrich wins another term

WASHINGTON (AP) - House Speaker Newt Gingrich survived a wrenching public debate over his ethics to win reelection yesterday over the opposition of minority Democrats and a handful of dissenting Republicans.

Gingrich became the first Republican reelected speaker in 68 years, but his victory is tarnished. He awaits a public airing in the House ethics committee of his use of tax-exempt organizations for potentially partisan purposes and his inaccurate responses to investigators, and a likely vote of rebuke by the House itself.

"To the degree to which I was too brash, too self-confident or too pushy, I apologize," he told colleagues after walking through the chamber, shaking hands all the way down to the speaker's chair.

Mastermind of the Republican takeover of Congress two years ago, Gingrich received 216 votes for a second two-year term from the Republican majority. Democratic leader Dick Gephardt got 205.

Former spymaster faces German justice again

DUESSELDORF, Germany (Reuters) - Legendary East German spymaster Markus Wolf went on trial yesterday charged with three cases of Cold War skulduggery which could have come straight from the pages of a classic espionage thriller.

The suave 73-year old, who ran East Berlin's foreign intelligence network for over 30 years, strongly rebutted prosecutors' charges in

his opening statement to the court.

"I declare myself to be not guilty," said Wolf, dressed in a smart dark double-breasted suit. "I did not violate either the constitution of the country I served or its laws." The trial is a last bid by prosecutors to bring to book the elusive figure dubbed "the man without a face" as his western counterparts for decades had little idea what he looked like.

Wolf was convicted of treason in the same Duesseeldorf courtroom in 1993. But Germany's highest court overturned the decision in 1995 saying Wolf could not be convicted of spying on what was then a foreign country - West Germany. This time prosecutors have charged Wolf with crimes under East German law - abduction, coercion and causing bodily harm.

"Now the Federal Prosecutor is trying to turn me into an ordinary criminal," Wolf told the court, accusing prosecutors of staging the trial for purely political reasons to discredit the East German system and its leaders.

Prosecutors also revived a charge from Wolf's original trial of acting as a secret agent for a foreign power. The charges relate to intelligence work in the 1950s and 1960s.

One of his biggest coups was



ON TRIAL - German Spymaster Markus Wolf.

planting "mole" Guenter Guillaume inside Chancellor Willy Brandt's office - leading to Brandt's resignation in 1974.

In his statement to the court, Wolf also defended his record in the case of Georg Angerer, an East German citizen who had been held in custody for half a year in 1959.

Car bomb kills six in Algiers

PARIS (Reuters) - A huge car bomb exploded in central Algiers yesterday afternoon, killing six people and wounding at least 20, several of whom were in critical condition, security forces said.

An official source told Reuters by telephone that the security forces said the bomb went off near the main university faculty. The authorities have blamed previous bomb attacks on Moslem fundamentalists. The security force statement gave the toll as "provisional."

According to a police source around 40 people were wounded in the blast which rocked the area near the end of Algiers's main shopping street, Rue Didouche Mourad, blowing out windows and setting cars and one bus ablaze. One eyewitness said: "There were an awful lot of wounded. I saw a fireman picking up an arm from the ground."

Another witness, a crying student, said: "Not only have we had the strike [of university teachers] but now we have bombs." Heavily armed security forces, initially police but later soldiers, sealed off the area.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Wednesday, January 8, 1997

Gov't sets new taxes to pay for budget cuts

PRIME Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Finance Minister Dan Meridor have agreed to three new tax proposals to make up a NIS 270 million shortfall in the 1997 budget cut proposals.

The changes would fall on car air conditioners, VAT on minivans and diesel prices. The existing exemption from purchase tax on air conditioners will be lifted.

When gasoline prices were substantially increased two weeks ago, it was decided to reduce the cost of diesel at the same time.

The earlier decision to also lower domestic fuel prices remains in force, the Treasury saying it does not want to hit the socially weak.

These latest proposals are being introduced following the Knesset's rejection of the plan to cancel half a tax credit point for married, working women.

To a statement, the Treasury said that, once implemented, these proposals will allow for the budget deficit to reach 2.8% of GDP, which was the government's target for January 1.

Gov't to discuss blueprint for structural reforms today

Among proposals: Private buses, gas-station deregulation, 3rd cell-phone operator

THE cabinet is scheduled to meet this afternoon to discuss a long-awaited Treasury-prepared blueprint for accelerated deregulation and demonopolization across the public sector.

At the center of the plan are the transport, television, water, construction, fuel, and agriculture sectors.

On his election, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said he wanted the structural changes in the economy to be crystallized within the first 100 days of the new government.

Included in the recommendations are: Opening public transport to competition, leading to a likely end of Egged and Dan's monopoly.

Establishing a committee which will recommend ways to speed up the opening of new gasoline stations. A second committee will look for methods to bring an end to the domination of the market by a handful of companies.

Excavating ways to end Agrexco's monopoly, including allowing producers to export directly. Additional measures to be considered include: The creation of a public committee to examine the possible raising of the pension age for men and women.

handled by companies operating at arm's length from the local authorities. This is likely to pave the way for privately owned local water companies.

While Netanyahu and Meridor have had a partial success in implementing the budget cut, and are now about to formulate plans for structural reforms and privatization, they have not yet completed work on the Brodet Committee's recommendations on reforming the capital markets.

The government had wanted industrial water prices to be raised by 15% immediately and another 18% on August 1. However, the Manufacturers' Association launched a vigorous campaign against the increase.

The committee eventually decided on a compromise whereby the increase would be approved, but over a longer time period to make it easier for companies to adjust.

Under the plan approved yesterday, prices will rise 12% immediately, 10% next January 1 and another 10% on January 1, 1999.

The price of purified sewage water will be set at 20% below that of pure water to encourage its use.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Some 240 technological start-up companies were launched last year, according to the Chief Scientist's Office. Of these, 21 percent deal with communications, and 35% medical instrumentation.

Work will continue on a bill to restrict long-term supply contracts between gas companies and gas stations, the Knesset Economics Committee decided yesterday.

A company's managing director will be forbidden to serve as chairman of its board, according to a bill approved by the Knesset Law Committee yesterday.

'96 withdrawals from provident funds at NIS 12b.

THE commercial banks' provident funds suffered redemptions of NIS 11.93 billion in 1996, reflecting the public's preference to invest in saving plans on the one hand, and a general increase in private consumption on the other, the Treasury reported yesterday.

After 11 successive months in which the provident funds suffered withdrawals, the funds registered deposits of NIS 397.37 million in December. The funds suffered redemptions of NIS 381.97m. in November and NIS 1.06b. in October.

Tadiran wins \$35m. deal to supply Spanish army

TADIRAN Communications and Systems has won a \$35 million contract to supply military communications equipment to the Spanish army, executives of the Holon-based company said yesterday.

The equipment is meant to integrate the different levels of command and control and includes communications and navigation terminals and integrated tactical systems.

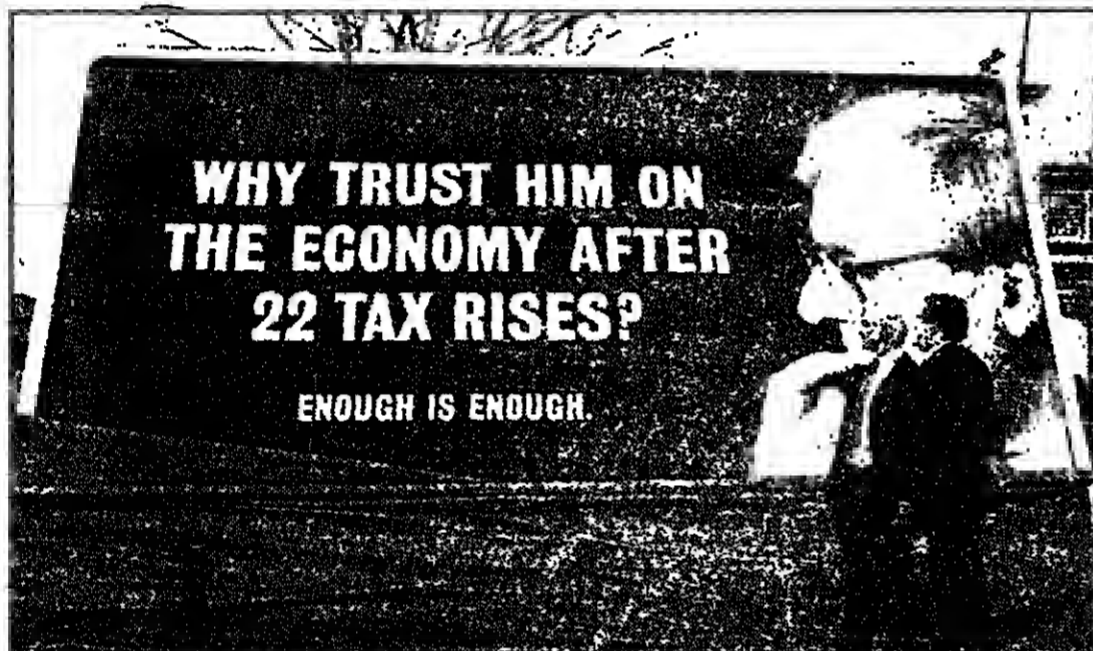
Dassault, Aerospatiale to merge

PARIS (Reuters) - The French government yesterday confirmed that state-owned Aerospatiale and combat plane maker Dassault Aviation would merge into a single company and would have a single supervisory board and executive committee.

Teledata receives \$7.2m. order

TELEDATA Communication Ltd. of Herzliya yesterday announced that it received a \$7.2 million order for its CT Loop Pair Gain System from an undisclosed European customer.

ISRAELI MONEY MARKETS. Patah (foreign currency deposit rates) (11.9.96). Currency (deposit for): 3 MONTHS, 6 MONTHS, 12 MONTHS. U.S. dollar (\$250,000) 4.75, 5.000, 5.375. Pound sterling (£100,000) 3.875, 4.000, 4.250. German mark (DM 200,000) 1.825, 1.825, 1.825. Swiss franc (SF 200,000) 0.825, 0.750, 1.000.



John Prescott, deputy leader of the British Labor party (right), and shadow Treasury spokesman Alastair Darling unveil a poster attacking the Conservative Party yesterday in the latest salvo in a series of poster wars between Britain's two leading political parties.

Insurers: We'll cut premiums only if car thefts decline

THE insurance sector would be willing to reduce premiums by 15% to 20% if the number of annual car thefts would fall to 25,000, the average figure for 1993-94, Insurance Companies Association chairman Itamar Borowitz said yesterday.

Car thefts increased to a new record high of 36,732 in 1996 compared with 33,050 in the previous year. About 130 cars are stolen each day, of which only 30% are recovered.

In December 4,028 vehicles were stolen, up 16.2% from November. "This is the highest number of cars ever stolen in one month in Israel," said Borowitz, adding that the number of stolen cars has increased each month since April.

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

600 and NIS 800 on every insured car, said Borowitz. He urged the public to pressure the government to solve the problem.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority has indirectly proposed, through the IDF, to compensate insurance companies for stolen cars on condition that the vehicles are registered in Gaza.

"We have not spoken to and do not intend to talk with people who steal cars," said Shmuel Golomb, general manager of the association.

According to the association the high number of car thefts last year resulted in damages of about NIS 1.5 billion, while insurance firms incurred losses of about NIS 1b. The trade deficit resulting from the need to replace these cars with imported vehicles reached NIS 400 million.

The association and the Transportation Ministry are working on a program to mark popular vehicle parts, in an attempt to reduce car thefts and prevent trade in stolen spare parts. About 60% of all stolen cars return to the market in the form of spare parts, said Borowitz.

The cost of developing a network and data base to mark the vehicle parts is estimated at about NIS 900m. The association has agreed to finance about NIS 750m. of this sum.

Deficit reduction law passes narrowly in Knesset

THE government narrowly passed a law late Monday night to set definite limits to the deficit in each of the next five years, thanks to the assistance of Meretz MK Avraham Poraz.

The law passed by a vote of 7-6, with Poraz casting the decisive vote with the government. Had he joined his fellow opposition MKs in voting against, the bill would have failed.

Water for industry to cost 32% more

EVELYN GORDON

THE Knesset Finance Committee yesterday approved a 32 percent increase in the price industrial companies pay for water.

The government had wanted industrial water prices to be raised by 15% immediately and another 18% on August 1. However, the Manufacturers' Association launched a vigorous campaign against the increase.

The committee eventually decided on a compromise whereby the increase would be approved, but over a longer time period to make it easier for companies to adjust.

Teledata receives \$7.2m. order

JENNIFER FRIEDLIN

TELEDATA Communication Ltd. of Herzliya yesterday announced that it received a \$7.2 million order for its CT Loop Pair Gain System from an undisclosed European customer.

"A fax for you" All you want to know about your accounts, on your fax, within 15 minutes. 15 minutes and you're gone...

DON'T BE LEFT OUT! If you don't have e-mail or even a computer you can still advertise! INTERNET POST CLASSIFIEDS Reach all of Israel and the world for just: For Two weeks \$13 US Dollars/NIS 45. One Month \$25 US Dollars/NIS 88. Two Month \$45 US Dollars/NIS 168. Three Months \$70 US Dollars/NIS 245. Six Months \$130 US Dollars/NIS 456.

Bezeq investments slashed by 16%

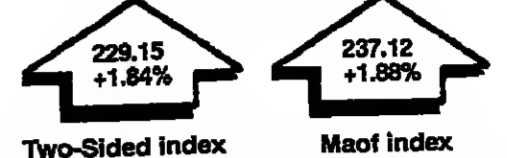
BEZEQ's investment budget will be cut this year by 16 percent, outgoing company director-general Yitzhak Kaul announced yesterday.

Bezeq investments slashed by 16%

This reality, said Kaul, requires the company to revise its budget.

TASE jumps for fifth day in a row

TEL AVIV STOCK MARKET ROBERT DANIEL



SHARES, continuing their run high on February 16, 1994, when it closed at 238.8. Across the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, NIS 194.2 million of shares traded, nearly 2.5 times last month's average daily trading. Nearly seven issues advanced for every one that declined. The indexes were led higher by the Elbit companies, holding companies Koor Industries and Clal Electronics, developers Industrial Buildings and El-Rov Israel, Kitan, Polgat and Team Computers. The Two-Sided Index gained 1.84 percent to 229.15, while the Maof Index added 1.88% to 237.12. The Maof was last this

London shares weaken

WORLD MARKET ROUNDUP

LONDON (Reuters) - British shares ended mostly weaker yesterday, dragged down by falling bonds, a weaker performance on Wall Street and a call for higher interest rates from the Bank of England's deputy governor. The FTSE 100 index closed 27.7 points down at 4,078.3, just above the day's low, with decliners in a seven-to-two majority. FRANKFURT - Shares ended listless bourse trade slightly ahead and dealers said there was disappointment that Wall Street's overnight close failed to add much to last week's strong rally. The DAX-30 index of leading German shares closed just 4.81 points up at 2,836.13. The IBIS DAX index later ended all-day electronic dealings at 2,876.34 points. PARIS - Shares closed easier in line with Wall Street but remained above the 2,300 level after having pushed the CAC-40 index to a fresh year high at 2,315.25. The blue-chip CAC-40 index closed down 4.98 points at 2,301.69. ZURICH - Shares closed little changed in fairly active trade and dealers said the market was likely to move sideways during the next few sessions.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 average pulled 549.81 points or 2.83 percent to close at 18,896.19. This was the lowest close since December 5, 1995. SYDNEY - The share market closed lower as sentiment softened slightly and the gold sector dived more than 3% in response to the falling price of bullion. The All Ordinaries index lost 9.1 points to 2,400.7. JOHANNESBURG - A jump in futures contracts propelled spot industrial shares higher in afternoon trading after a slow but firm start following fresh highs on Wall Street overnight. The industrial index surged 61.7 points to close at 7,944.7. The gold index finished off 9.9 points at 1,412.3, a fresh year low. The all-share spot index ended up 37.9 points at 6,614.1.

Dow hits record 6,600

WALL STREET REPORT

NEW YORK (AP) - The Dow Jones industrial average closed above 6,600 for the first time as stocks rallied back yesterday from steep losses spurred by the worsening interest rate backdrop in the bond market. The Dow erased a 55-point slide to finish with a gain of 33.48 points and closed at 6,600.66. On Monday, the blue-chip barometer stumbled to a record high after surrendering a 75-point gain and dipping into negative territory.

CRASHES

(Continued from Page 1) The youth's age, the fact that he worked in the market, had no license and needed his employer's keys and therefore his permission to use the car, pointed to an accident. But the employer, who also was investigated, denied that he gave permission to use the car. Eyewitnesses said the youth seemed to be stammered. "When he got out, he grabbed his head in both hands as though something happened that he did not plan," said Yehoshua Salem, in his shop opposite the Haba Burekas store. "But who can be sure? He came out straight towards the market. Even a child who plays with a car knows how to turn right and left." Salem knew the boy well because he had worked in the market for three years and delivered fruit and vegetables to Salem's shop. His wife said the boy appeared suspicious. He was "tall for his age and his manner was aggressive," she said. Neither of them knew his name. There are many school-age West Bank children working in the market to whom no one pays much attention. They are sent off to work in Israel by their parents because a child under 16 does not require his own ID and it is easier for him than for an adult to get through roadblocks at the entrance to Jerusalem. They work six hours a day, missing school three days a week. Mahane Yehuda has been a popular venue for terrorist attacks in the past and there have been warnings of possible attacks by Hamas and Islamic Jihad threat to average the shooting attack by a religious extremist in Hebron. This vegetable market last week. This week is also the anniversary of the assassination of master bomber Yihye "The Engineer" Ayyash in Gaza last year. One vegetable stall owner said that he had the youth once for expressing support of Ayyash. Others said he was not true. "What did he know? He was just a kid," said Tal Calderon, who runs a bakery opposite the shop where the youth worked. The kids in his shop nodded and kept right on working. Heidi J. Gleit contributed to this report.

SWISS

(Continued from Page 1) assets sent to Switzerland by Jews attempting to escape the Nazis. The cabinet said it wanted dormant bank accounts totalling some SF 40m. (\$29.5m.) to be "put to a proper use." Switzerland's two biggest newspapers, the conservative Tages Anzeiger and the liberal Tages Anzeiger both urged the government in editorials yesterday to make a conciliatory gesture. Bern's top official handling the issue said the government expected to decide by the end of January whether to create a memorial fund. The Swiss bankers' association hailed the proposal for talks but said a joint commission of Jewish groups and Swiss banks headed by former US central bank chief Paul Volcker should first rule on how much of the money stemmed from Jews killed in the Holocaust - a conclusion expected in mid-1998.

TEL AVIV STOCKS

Multi-sided trading

Table of Tel Aviv Stock Market data including Commercial, Industrials, Mortgage Banks & Finance, Financial Institutions, Trade & Services, and Parallel List. Columns include Name, Price, Change, and Volume.

Two-sided trading

Table of Two-sided trading data with columns for Name, Price, Change, and Volume. Includes sub-sections for AFTERNOON and MORNING.

ISRAEL DISCOUNT BANK logo and text: THE PEOPLE YOU CAN BANK TO

INTERNATIONAL STOCK PRICES

Table of International Stock Prices listing various global markets and stock indices with their respective values and changes.

Key Representative Rates table showing US Dollar, Sterling, and Mark rates against NIS.

NEW YORK STOCK MARKETS

New York Stock Market Indexes table showing NYSE, NASDAQ, and other market indices.

Other stock market indexes table showing FTSE 100, Nikkei, and other international indices.

ISRAELI STOCKS IN US

Table of Israeli stocks listed in the US, including companies like Elbit, Koor, and others.

LIBOR RATES

Table of Libor rates for various currencies and terms.

CommStock Trading Ltd. logo and contact information.

US commodities table listing prices for various goods.

London commodities table listing prices for various goods.

Spot market metals (US) table listing prices for various metals.

New York metal futures table listing prices for various metal futures.

London metal futures table listing prices for various metal futures.

Source: Reuters, Bloomberg, and other market data providers.

Spurs left to pick up crumbs again

MANCHESTER (Reuters) - Tottenham has an immediate opportunity to avenge its third-round English FA Cup defeat at Manchester United when Alex Ferguson's men visit White Hart Lane for a Premier League match on Sunday.

in "Tottenham-style" players such as Dennis Bergkamp and Patrick Vieira and are high in the table after seemingly ditching their old pragmatic approach under new French coach Arsene Wenger for a much more expansive style which had been the hallmark of Tottenham for decades.

Chairman Alan Sugar, the man Venables brought in to save Tottenham from bankruptcy in 1991 and who sacked Venables two years later, said earlier this season that Tottenham would be champions in three years' time.

Klinsmann or Ossie Ardiles. Scales was in the reserves at Liverpool, while Ruel Fox and Andy Sinton were both out of favor at Newcastle and Sheffield Wednesday before moving to White Hart Lane.

Niekro elected to Hall; Sutton, Perez fall short

NEW YORK (AP) — Just like one of his knuckleball pitches, Phil Niekro tumbled into the Hall of Fame.

percent in his first year of eligibility in 1993, followed by 60 percent in 1994 and 62.1 percent in 1995.

the award just three times. He had a total of three 20-win seasons. Niekro ranks fifth on the career list of losses and never won a post-season game.



THUMBS UP — Magic Johnson smiles for the media after arriving in Jakarta to play a number of exhibition matches.

Amid health ministry warnings, Magic Johnson arrives in Indonesia

JAKARTA (AP) — Magic Johnson arrived yesterday in Indonesia after the country's health minister said the public had to be warned that the former NBA star could spread the virus that causes AIDS.

Minister Suyudi denied that claim Monday and said the government welcomed Johnson's visit this week.

He decided to make a comeback before the 1992-93 season but quit again during the exhibition season after several players expressed concerns about playing with him.

Seles out of Australian Open

MELBOURNE (AP) — Defending women's singles champion Monica Seles has joined a growing list of athletes from the upcoming Australian Open tennis championships.

after being stabbed during a tournament in Hamburg, Germany, in 1993. She returned to win the Australian title last year.

Lightning. Canadiens 5, Whalers 4. Vinceot Damphousse scored three goals for host Montreal, including the game-winner with 3.4 seconds left in regulation.

Pippen, Jordan lead Bulls past Jazz

CHICAGO (AP) — Scottie Pippen scored 24 points and Michael Jordan 23 as the Chicago Bulls avenged a November loss to Utah by beating the Jazz 102-89 Monday night.

which is 6-7 since opening the season 17-2. The Bulls started the season with 12 consecutive victories before losing 105-100 at Utah.

Hornets 109, Warriors 101. Glen Rice scored a season-high 39 points and Anthony Mason added 27 points and 18 rebounds as Charlotte notched a road victory.

Rangers extend home unbeaten streak

NEW YORK (AP) — Goaltender Mike Richter extended his unbeaten streak to 16 games and the New York Rangers their home unbeaten streak to seven with a 2-2 tie against the Colorado Avalanche on Monday night.

ones, some of the spectacular variety. Lightning 4, Senators 3. Defenseman Bill Houlder scored his first goal of the season as Tampa Bay won on the road.

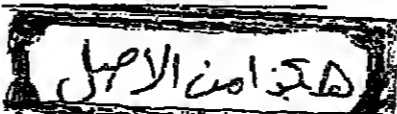
Lightning. Canadiens 5, Whalers 4. Vinceot Damphousse scored three goals for host Montreal, including the game-winner with 3.4 seconds left in regulation.

Jailed hockey coach fears for life after TV remarks

CALGARY (AP) — The former junior hockey coach doing jail time for sexually abusing two players says his life is in danger because of comments by CBC commentator Don Cherry.

Lightning. Canadiens 5, Whalers 4. Vinceot Damphousse scored three goals for host Montreal, including the game-winner with 3.4 seconds left in regulation.

CLASSIFIEDS. A large section containing various real estate and service advertisements, including 'GERMAN COLONY', 'PARADISE MOMBASSA HOTEL', and 'FORGET THE REST!!'.



Opposition furious at PM's withdrawal of IBA budget from Knesset Finance C'ttee

OPPOSITION MKs were up in arms yesterday over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to withdraw the Israel Broadcasting Authority budget from the Knesset Finance Committee.

Two Meretz MKs, Amnon Rubinstein and Haim Oron, said they would petition the High Court of Justice against the decision.

Netanyahu withdrew the budget following a procedural appeal against it by two members of the IBA plenum, in accordance with a legal opinion from his ministry's legal advisor, Shimon Stein. However, opposition MKs charged that the real reason for the withdrawal was due to religious MKs' objections to *The Cameri Quintet* satire program and comedian Gil Kopatch.

The appeal, which was filed on January 5 by Likud activist Gil Samsonov and Hedva Spiegel, was based solely on the manner in which the plenum approved a NIS 20.8 million budget cut. According to the appeal, the cut was approved by a telephone sur-

EVELYN GORDON

vey of the members rather than at a formal meeting, and the appellants' requests for detailed material on the cut before the "vote" were denied. This is not the proper way for such a decision to be made, the two said, and they therefore demanded that the budget be returned to the IBA plenum for a proper discussion.

Stein, after reviewing the appeal, said the proper course was to accede to their request, withdraw the budget from the Finance Committee and return it to the IBA. Netanyahu therefore did so. Opposition MKs, however, were furious.

Avraham Shohat (Labor) charged that only Finance Minister Dan Meridor had the right to withdraw a budget.

"The state of Israel has a coalition which consists of [director-general of the Prime Minister's Office] Avidgor Lieberman and the haredi parties," he said, adding that the decision left the IBA operating without a budget, in violation of the law.

However, Finance Committee legal advisor Anna Schneider said Netanyahu did have the right to withdraw the budget, since as the minister in charge of the IBA, it was his job to decide on the Samsonov-Spiegel appeal. She had listed this as a possible option in a legal opinion submitted to the committee even before Netanyahu's letter arrived.

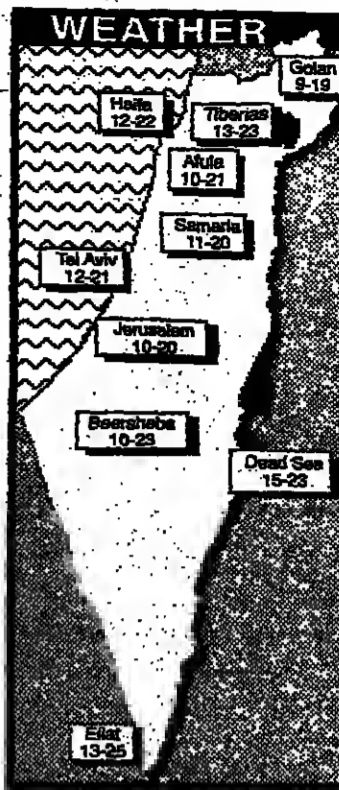
Oron charged that Netanyahu had simply seized on the appeal as an excuse to withdraw the budget, once it became clear to him that there was a majority in the committee for approving it.

"Everything is kosher when it comes to gagging people and making life difficult for the IBA," he said.

Ophir Pines (Labor) noted that this is the only 1997 budget which has still not been approved. He said he had filed a complaint with the Civil Service Commission against what he termed Lieberman's attempts to pressure coalition MKs into opposing the budget.



Dancers Galina Panov and Bill Luther prepare for their performance of 'The Lovers' in Jerusalem yesterday. (Hanan Harel)



Forecast: Partly cloudy to clear. Slight rise in temperatures.

AROUND THE WORLD

City	Low	High	Weather
Amsterdam	10	14	cloudy
Berlin	8	12	cloudy
Buenos Aires	22	28	rain
Calcutta	24	30	rain
Chicago	12	18	cloudy
Copenhagen	11	17	cloudy
Frankfurt	8	14	cloudy
Geneva	8	14	cloudy
Helsinki	4	10	cloudy
Hong Kong	14	20	clear
Jakarta	24	30	rain
London	8	14	cloudy
Los Angeles	13	19	clear
Moscow	7	13	cloudy
Mumbai	10	16	clear
New York	10	16	cloudy
Paris	10	16	cloudy
Perth	15	21	clear
Stockholm	7	13	cloudy
Sydney	16	22	clear
Tokyo	12	18	clear
Yokohama	12	18	cloudy
Zurich	8	14	cloudy

Supreme Court justice refuses to act against 'The Cameri Quintet' TV show

EVELYN GORDON

SUPREME Court Justice Theodor Or refused to issue an interim injunction yesterday against the screening of *The Cameri Quintet* on Channel 1.

Or was ruling on a request filed by Gabi Abutbul, a Shas representative on the Israel Broadcasting Authority's plenum. Abutbul had asked the court to either prohibit the broadcasts entirely or "moderate their crudity," until the plenum holds a discussion on the program in two weeks.

In his decision, Or wrote that even if parts of the program passed the bounds of good taste in the eyes of part of the public, this did not justify such a "far-reaching infringement on freedom of expression" as an injunction. This is especially so given the fact that the upcoming programs, like previous ones, will be scrutinized by various IBA officials, and that the IBA

plenum is to discuss the matter in another two weeks, he said.

Afterwards, Abutbul said he still had high hopes for the plenum discussion.

"I am certain there will be a majority [in the plenum] for moderating all these crude outbursts," said Abutbul. "There are things that are not appropriate for a public broadcast." The petition argued that the program frequently trampled on religious sensibilities, in violation of the Broadcasting Authority Law. This law states that programs offensive to large segments of the public cannot be aired.

The petition also charged that IBA director-general Mordechai Kirshenbaum had promised the plenum in September to personally view each *Cameri Quintet* program beforehand and moderate it where necessary, but had not done so.

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Hammer holds up TV show on homosexuality

ESTHER HECHT

EDUCATION Minister Zevulun Hammer has held up the broadcast of a program on homosexuality prepared for Educational TV due to his world view, the minister's media adviser told the Knesset Status of Women Committee yesterday. The committee convened to discuss the minister's legal authority to interfere with the broadcasting of a specific program.

The program was scheduled to have been aired on October 10, 1996, as part of a weekly series for youngsters entitled *Open Cards*. In the series, adolescents and young adults speak frankly to each other about their concerns, including sex, alcohol and drug abuse, and becoming religiously observant. The minister postponed the program to November 21, but on November 20 announced he was postponing it again so he could examine it.

Media adviser Ephraim Lapid argued that Educational TV, a state communications channel, is under the minister's jurisdiction. He also presented Hammer's reasons for delaying the broadcast.

One reason was that showing a homosexual family conveys a message that is not part of the general consensus and should

not be presented in an educational context, Lapid said. Hammer also believes he must reconsider a program that is so emotionally laden and is about a subject with which part of society feels uncomfortable, Lapid continued.

The media adviser assured the committee that Hammer's decision to hold up the program was not political, but derived from his personal world view. Lapid could not tell the committee when the minister would conclude his examination of the program.

Educational TV head Ahuva Feinmesser told the committee she and other professionals had vetted the program for broadcast prior to Hammer's decision.

Aharon Pollak, a Tel Aviv lawyer who represents the Israel Bar Association in matters of education, said the minister had overstepped his jurisdiction. Hammer's responsibility for Educational TV pertains to administrative matters only, and it is illegal for him to substitute his own judgment for the judgment of professionals in the ministry, except in the most extreme circumstances, he said.

Psychologist Jerry Levinson,

who for three years ran a counseling program for homosexual and lesbian youngsters, spoke about the harm done to young people by withholding the information in the program from them. "I've had hundreds of calls and letters from youngsters about their fears and the atmosphere of persecution, exacerbated by pronouncements by public figures like the president," he said. "Correct information is crucial for them."

He cited a recent Canadian study which found that homosexuals and lesbians account for 70 percent of suicide attempts among young people.

Hava Bar-On, who prepared a booklet on homosexuality for the Education Ministry to guide teachers and counselors in dealing with the subject, said the educators' goal was to provide information and counteract myths, and in particular to help youngsters in distress.

MK Yael Dayan, who chaired the meeting, asked Lapid to inform the committee when the minister's examination of the program would begin, when it would be completed, and what it will include. She also recommended that the minister set a new date for airing the program, and keep to it.

No drought yet - officially

DAVID RUDGE

HYDROLOGICAL experts are to meet next Sunday to formulate plans to manage the country's dwindling water resources in the coming year in view of what looks like a winter drought.

The meeting had been scheduled to take place last month, but was twice deferred because of the dearth of rainfall so far this winter.

The experts will make recommendations to the water commissioner - and National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon, who are primarily responsible for deciding whether or not to declare a drought situation.

The decision itself is likely to be deferred for a few more weeks in the hope that the rains will still come and compensate for the dearth of precipitation to date.

Rainfall so far has been well below average for this time of year to the detriment of farmers, who already have lost millions of shekels worth of field crops because seeds have dried up in the soil.

Lake Kinneret is also showing signs of the unofficial drought, with the level of water continuing to drop instead of rising as it would in a normal winter.

Mekorot officials said the water level is 70 centimeters below that which it stood at this time last year and only 1.40 meters from the "red line."

The red line is the point below which experts have decreed the level of water cannot drop because it would cause irreparable damage to the lake's ecosystem and water quality.

Mekorot officials said that in the event of insufficient rain this winter, pumping from Lake Kinneret into the National Water Carrier would have to be greatly reduced and other sources used instead.

This would mean increasing pumping from the country's two main underground reservoirs, Yarkon Tanimim and the coastal aquifer - both of which are still relatively replete.

According to the officials, there would be sufficient reserves from these sources to meet the country's water requirements in the coming year. The problem, however, would arise in subsequent years if the underground reservoirs become depleted.

The Agriculture Ministry is already recommending measures to reduce water consumption, including the use of decorative plants which require little watering and efficient systems for irrigating public parks and private gardens. There are also suggestions for campaigns to make the public more aware of the need to conserve water.

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7 arrested in Acre drug raid

SEVEN suspected drug dealers from Acre's Old City were arrested during a police raid early yesterday morning. The operation, in which around 50 policemen and detectives took part, followed months of work and evidence-gathering by an undercover agent.

Those arrested are suspected of selling drugs to the undercover agent. The suspects were brought before the Acre Magistrate's Court yesterday and remained pending further inquiries. *David Rudge*

61 income tax workers charged with misusing data

DISCIPLINARY charges have been filed against 61 income tax employees in the last three years for making illegal use of data in the Income Tax Commission's computers. Treasury representatives told the Knesset State Control Committee yesterday. This is out of 131 employees investigated on suspicion of such abuse. *Evelyn Gordon*

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